



STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Tony Evers, Governor  
Joel Brennan, Secretary

December 31, 2020

To: Governor Tony Evers  
Jeff Renk, Chief Clerk, Wisconsin State Senate  
Patrick Fuller, Chief Clerk, Wisconsin State Assembly

From: Michael Basford, Director, State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness

VIA EMAIL

Pursuant to §16.03(2)(c), Wisconsin Statutes, please find attached the annual report for the State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness.

In addition to fulfilling my statutory obligation by delivering this report, I will also be sending copies to Council members and other interested parties via email and will presently be posting a pdf of this report on the Council's website.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require any more information.

Thank you, and Happy New Year!

Michael Basford  
Director  
State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness

cc (VIA EMAIL):

All members, Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly  
Council Members: Secretary Joel Brennan (Administration),  
Secretary Emilie Amundson (Children and Families), Secretary  
Kevin Carr (Corrections), Secretary Andrea Palm (Health  
Services), Secretary Mary Kolar (Veterans Affairs), Secretary Amy  
Pechacek (Workforce Development), Superintendent Carolyn  
Stanford Taylor (Public Instruction), Executive Director Joaquín  
Altoro (WI Housing and Economic Development Authority),  
Rafael J. Acevedo, Jr., Gai Lorenzen, Torrie Kopp Mueller, Carrie  
Poser

# State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness

## 2020 Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature

Prepared by Michael Basford, Director  
Submitted December 31, 2020

At the beginning of 2020, homelessness in Wisconsin remained a challenging issue throughout all areas of the state. The annual point-in-time count in January recorded 4,515 people in emergency shelters, transitional housing, Safe Havens or unsheltered. These numbers included 338 veterans, 611 chronically homeless (defined as a single individual, or head of household, with a disabling condition who has either experienced homelessness for longer than a year, during which time the individual may have lived in a shelter, Safe Haven, or a place not meant for human habitation or experienced homelessness four or more times in the last three years), and 324 people who were unsheltered. The Department of Public Instruction reported 18,349 homeless students (defined as children and youths as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence) in Wisconsin schools.

Most of these numbers reflected very slight decreases from the previous year (a slight increase in the number of unsheltered homeless persons being an exception), but also showed the need for better efforts and more resources to house the most vulnerable of our state.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for state agencies and community systems that serve the homeless. Most of the Council's energy and attention this year was devoted to assisting in the response to these challenges.

### Interagency Council Meetings

The Interagency Council held four meetings in 2020. COVID-19 response required meetings to be rescheduled from the first and second quarters. Representing agencies and member organizations for Council meetings in 2020 were:

Governor Tony Evers, Chair

Secretary Joel Brennan (Administration)

Secretary Emilie Amundson, Deputy Legislative Liaison Jenifer Cole (Children and Families)

Secretary Kevin Carr, Reentry Director Dr. Silvia Jackson (Corrections)

Deputy Secretary Dr. Julie Willems Van Dijk, Assistant Deputy Secretary Lisa Olson, and Department of Medicaid Services Policy Advisor Leah Ramirez (Health Services)

Chief of Staff Dr. Scott Jones, State Coordinator for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth  
Kristine Nadolski (Public Instruction)

Executive Director Joaquín Altoro, Deputy Executive Director Kim Plache (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority)

Secretary Caleb Frostman, Deputy Secretary Robert Cherry, Jr. (Workforce Development)

Secretary Mary Kolar (Veterans Affairs)

Carrie Poser (Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care)

Torrie Kopp Mueller (Dane County Continuum of Care)

Rafael J. Acevedo, Jr. (Milwaukee County Continuum of Care)

Gai Lorenzen, Teresa Reinders (Racine County Continuum of Care)

The activities for the Council for the meetings were:

- **May 5<sup>th</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population and discussion on needs and strategies for housing homeless persons and families and preventing homelessness after Safer-at-Home.
- **July 22<sup>nd</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, update on the progress of the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program, presentation on proposals by the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness, and update on future meetings and priorities for Council.
- **September 29<sup>th</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, reports on workgroup presentations from Departments of Administration, Children and Families, and Veterans Affairs, discussion on “The Wisconsin Homeless Crisis Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond” report from the Wisconsin Continuum of Care
- **December 9<sup>th</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, reports on workgroup presentations from Departments of Corrections, Health Services, and Workforce Development, approval of signing on to National Low-Income Housing Coalition’s letter to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approval of 2021 meeting schedule, and update on the Hand and a Home plan update

Eight workgroup sessions were held in 2021 on February 11<sup>th</sup>, March 12<sup>th</sup>, June 30<sup>th</sup>, August 19<sup>th</sup>, September 15<sup>th</sup>, October 6<sup>th</sup>, October 14<sup>th</sup>, and December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Sessions focused on the following:

- Presentations highlighting agencies that make up the Interagency Council
- Presentation from Joe Volk from the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness on proposals from the Coalition
- Review of data updates from the Institute for Community Alliances pertaining to goals in the “Hand and a Home” plan
- Input on updates to the “Hand and a Home” plan

## **Response to COVID-19**

COVID-19 created unprecedented strains on community homelessness systems throughout the state. To adhere to U.S. Centers for Disease Control Prevention guidelines for social distancing in emergency shelters and reduction of staff and volunteers, most shelters had to dramatically reduce their capacities, stop taking new clients, or close entirely in response to COVID-19. Additionally, many people who were doubled-up in housing needed to leave where they were staying, and many homeless people declined to seek emergency shelter out of fear of contracting coronavirus. These factors, and other social conditions, resulted in a surge in unsheltered homelessness in Wisconsin.

Were it not for the absolutely heroic efforts by agencies and communities around the state to implement creative responses to this crisis, untold numbers of homeless people would have become ill or have succumbed to COVID-19. At significant expense, many agencies and communities stood up non-congregate sheltering in alternate locations such as hotels and motels. Continuum of Care and other agencies recognized the challenges very early in this crisis and worked quickly to adapt operations to implement social distancing and other methods to prevent spread.

State government response included manifold actions to help homeless people and to keep people in housing and out of the homelessness system during the ensuing economic downturn. They included:

- On March 26th, Governor Evers announced a 60-day moratorium on rental evictions and housing foreclosures - which provided temporary relief for Wisconsinites affected by the economic downturn.
- As that moratorium ended, Governor Evers announced a new program, the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program administered through the Department of Administration and local CAP agencies, that provided over \$28 million in CARES ACT funds for up to \$3,000 per household to help people avoid evictions. At the close of the program, over 14,200 households were assisted through WRAP.
- On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Governor Evers also announced the creation of the Food Security Initiative – which provided \$15 million in CARES ACT funds for food banks and non-profits to assist people experiencing food insecurity.
- The Department of Administration’s Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources also has worked to distribute HUD Emergency Solutions Grant funding provided by the CARES ACT. The first round of \$12.7 million was allocated in October and a second round of \$19.7 million is on schedule to be allocated in early 2021.

As has happened in previous years, we have experienced the loss of homeless people who have died outside in Wisconsin. The surge in unsheltered homelessness as a result of COVID-19 is cause for alarm and concern and highlight the need to return people to housing as quickly as possible.

Included in the thousands of people in Wisconsin who died as a result of COVID-19 were two people whose lives were dedicated to helping care for the homeless and whose losses are being profoundly felt in the communities in which they served. Bob Quam was the Director of Development for the Stevens Point Salvation Army shelter. Bob worked tirelessly to assist people who were struggling with addictions and people who were looking to transition into permanent housing. He died of COVID-19 in September. Billy Ross was a former client and very well-regarded staff member at the Milwaukee Rescue Mission. Billy’s story was one of the transformational powers many agencies have in the lives of vulnerable people they serve. He died of COVID-19 in April. These are two of the too-many reminders of the toll COVID-19 is having on our communities and supports.

## **Hand and a Home Update**

As we entered 2020, a goal for the year was to draft an update for the “Hand and a Home” state homelessness plan. The goals for the plan update this year included the following:

### ***1) Adding a much-needed section on addressing racial disparities in the homelessness systems and housing markets in Wisconsin.***

We face an urgent need to address the issue of racial disparities in homelessness systems and housing markets. Decades of redlining, housing and job discrimination, and other factors have led to the fact that while Wisconsin’s population is 83 percent white, Black, Indigenous and People of Color make up a majority of those served by the homelessness system. If we are to end homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin, we will need to push for solutions that advance racial equity and increase housing opportunities for BIPOC Wisconsinites. The facts are indisputable, and we can easily connect the dots between inequities and homelessness.

To address this need, a Racial Equity workgroup was recruited and has been regularly meeting to learn more details and review the current plan. The members of the workgroup are:

- TJ Atkins, Executive Director of The Community Table, Eau Claire
- Ian Bautista, Senior Director of Civic Engagement for Greater Milwaukee Foundation and President and Chief Community Development Officer for Comunidad Milwaukee

- Stacy Broach, Education Specialist specializing in parent and family engagement with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Madison
- Dominique Christian, Housing Program Manager for The Road Home Dane County, Madison
- Gregory Davis, Co-Founder at One 5 Olive, Milwaukee
- Kathleen Fisher, Executive Director of Family Promise of Ozaukee County, Port Washington
- Loreen Gage, Director of Client Services at Housing Initiatives, Inc., Cottage Grove
- David Griggs, Co-Founder at One 5 Olive, Milwaukee
- Peng Her, Chief Executive Officer for The Hmong Institute, Madison
- Tammie King-Johnson (Workgroup Chair), manager of the House of Mercy homeless shelter, Janesville
- Dana McLester, Residential Development Director for the Oneida Nation Comprehensive Housing Division, De Pere
- Marc Perry, Executive Director for Community Action Inc., of Rock and Walworth Counties
- DeShanda Williams, MSCP, Assistant Director, Nia Imani Family, Inc., Milwaukee

**2) Updating the “Performance Metrics” section to include details on responsibilities for implementing strategies, timelines, and (where possible) measurable goals. And,**

**3) Evaluating any themes, strategies, and goals for editing, augmenting or removing.**

For these, we devoted time at three workgroup meetings to review the current plan and launched a public comment page to take input. The COVID-19 response needs pushed the plan update schedule back several months, but as we end 2020 work is happening on the update. We look forward to having the update available for Council approval by no later than the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter in 2021.

## Director’s Activities

*From Michael Basford, Interagency Council on Homelessness Director:*

“In the 2019 Interagency Council Annual Report, I highlighted three duties for this position I developed in addition to the statutory requirements. Those duties were:

- ***Establish a relationship with communities and organizations around Wisconsin to understand how homelessness affects every area of Wisconsin, to learn the details of community responses to homelessness, and to provide whatever assistance I can to help these communities fight homelessness;***
- ***Identify areas of policy for focusing state resources; and***
- ***Serve as a conduit between levels of government.***

How those duties were realized in 2020 look radically different than how they looked and what they meant in 2019. Many of my activities as part of the COVID-19 response involved providing technical support to agencies and communities to help provide care for homeless people affected by the pandemic.

I created weekly check-ins with the Continuum of Care leads/DOA-DEHCR/HUD as well as weekly meetings with the State Emergency Operations Center Emergency Support Function 6 Team to monitor how the pandemic is affecting operations with homelessness programs around the state, provide assistance in PPE distribution for homeless services agencies, and connect information and data on non-congregate sheltering in communities with FEMA.

I started working in isolation from home on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Prior to that, the following was where I visited:

- January 6 - Janesville: Visit to YWCA of Rock County and Rock Valley Community Programs to discuss their “Housing 4 Our Vets” program.
- January 14 - Jefferson: Spoke at a meeting of the Jefferson County Continuum of Care.

- January 17 - Racine County: Spoke at a meeting of the Racine County Continuum of Care, visited Racine Vocational Ministry, Hospitality Center, and HOPES Center. Also visited Union Grove Veterans Home to meet with the VHRP staff.
- January 22 - Appleton: Met with staff of Pillars, Inc. and Advocap, visited Salvation Army shelter, and participated in the annual Point-in-Time count.
- January 23 - Oshkosh: Visited Day by Day Warming Center for the post-PIT Homeless Connect event.
- February 13 - Elkhart Lake: Spoke on “Veterans and Other Populations in Crisis” at the Home Energy Plus Conference.
- February 14 – Minneapolis and St. Paul: Met with the Staff of the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Hennepin County Homelessness Office, and Catholic Charities’ Higher Ground shelter for factfinding on Minnesota’s response to homelessness
- February 18: Dodgeville/Lancaster/Monroe: Visited agencies in the Southwest Continuum of Care area.
- February 20: Milwaukee and Janesville: Met with Milwaukee County Housing staff, attended Downtown Business Improvement District Community Intervention Team Meeting, City of Milwaukee Housing and attended “The Faces of Homelessness” community meeting in Janesville sponsored by the Diversity Action Team of Rock County.
- March 10: Beloit: Gave a speech on Wisconsin homelessness to the Beloit Rotary Club and met with Tammie King-Johnson of House of Mercy Homeless Center.

From home, I met with the following/participated in the following events:

- Abby Bar-Lev Wiley and Heidi Wegleitner, Legal Action of Wisconsin
- Adam Smith, Ying Ji Chuang, and Jesse Dirkman of Institute for Community Alliances
- Affordable Housing Action Alliance of Dane County
- Amy Stetzel, Corporation for Supportive Housing
- Andy Heidt, WISCAP
- Beloit, Finding Opportunities to Collaborate and Unite Services (B-FOCUS)
- Ben Lee, United Way of Marathon County
- Beverly Ebersold of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness with David Esposito and Merridith Montgomery of the Supportive Housing Provider Association of Illinois to discuss helping the State of Illinois stand up their own Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Beverly Ebersold, US Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Brianne Berres, Sojourner House (Eau Claire)
- Brown County Homeless and Housing Coalition
- Carrie Craig with the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless on Denver’s Social Impact Bonding project
- Casey Levich, US Department of Veterans Affairs
- Chandra Crawford, National Alliance to End Homelessness
- County Executive David Crowley, Milwaukee County with Jim Mathy of Milwaukee County Housing
- County Executive Thomas Nelson, Outagamie County
- Courtney Eison, Hilton Hotels
- Cris MacPhetridge, Thorp Housing Authority
- Dairyland Housing Coalition
- Dane County Homeless Services Consortium
- Danielle Claesges, Eau Claire Area School District
- Denise Lutz, Ashland County Housing Authority
- Department of Corrections Region 7 management meeting on issues of homelessness and re-entry from prison.
- Department of Public Instruction EHCY program meetings
- Deputy Chief Dan Blackdeer, Capitol Police
- Downtown Madison Homeless Shelter Steering Committee
- Duana Bremer, Salvation Army of Polk, Burnett, and St. Croix Counties
- Gloria Reyes, Briarpatch
- Housing Action Coalition of Waukesha County
- Housing Alliance of Racine County

- I assisted staff with Representative Schraa's office on a constituent concern.
- I gave a presentation to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition on June 8th about Wisconsin's progress in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on the homeless population and services for the homeless.
- I made two visits to a homeless encampment at McPike Park in Madison with outreach workers from the MachONE Health team.
- I participated in the Madison Homeless Veterans Stand-Down event - helping distribute food, clothing and supplies to formerly homeless veterans residing at Rethke Terrace.
- I participated in an La Crosse community meeting on single sheltering strategizing.
- I participated in a Zeidler Group "Frank Talks" on homelessness in Milwaukee
- I participated in a Madison/Dane County meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup> on housing stability as the CDC eviction moratorium was looking to end with Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, staff from Dane County Executive Joe Parisi's office, housing providers and housing advocates.
- I presented on the Interagency Council for the Balance of State Continuum of Care Board Meeting.
- Jan Miyasaki, Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition
- Janesville FOCUS
- Jeanette Petts, Community Action for South-Central Wisconsin
- Jeanne Semb, Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council
- Jeannine Field and Lisa Haen, Kenosha Human Development Services
- Jill Pfeiffer, YWCA Madison
- Jim Mathy and Eric Collins-Dyke, Milwaukee County Housing
- John Pollock, Public Justice Center
- Joseph Volk, Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness
- Julie McDermid - La Crosse Collaborative to End Homelessness
- Kate Markwardt, Lakeshore Cap
- Kathleen Fisher, Family Promise of Ozaukee County
- Kim Cable, CouleeCAP
- Lakeshore Continuum of Care
- Linda Ketcham, JustDane
- Lu Scheer, Advocap
- Madison Ald. Tag Evers
- Mary Leach-Sumlin of the Franciscan Peacemakers, Milwaukee
- Mayor Eric Genrich, City of Green Bay and Cheryl Detrick, Newcap
- Mayor John Antaramian of City of Kenosha, Representative Tod Ohnstad, Joe Volk (Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness) and Brad Paul (WISCAP)
- Mayor Katie Rosenberg, City of Wausau
- Mayor Lori Palmeri, City of Oshkosh
- Mayor Tim Kabat, City of La Crosse, and Caroline Gregerson, La Crosse Community Development Administrator
- Meeting with Madison Metropolitan School District Transition Education Program social workers and social workers from Dane County Joining Forces for Families
- Michael Bare, Community Advocates
- Michelle Friedrich, South-West Cap
- Mille Rounsville, Northwest Community Services Agency (Superior)
- Milwaukee Ald. JoCasta Zamarripa
- Milwaukee Ald. José Pérez, with City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County housing staff
- Milwaukee Continuum of Care shelter providers
- Milwaukee County Supervisor Ryan Clancy
- Milwaukee Downtown Business Improvement District Community Intervention Team
- Molly Yatso Butz, Day by Day Warming Shelter in Oshkosh
- Nikki Gerhard and Ryne Lodl with the City of Appleton
- Northwoods Continuum of Care
- Renee Kimberger, Pathfinders Milwaukee
- Representative Steve Doyle

- Ryan Graham, Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care
- Sandra Brekke, Gundersen Health Systems
- Saul Newton, Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce
- Sgt. Joel Kuczynski, Sheboygan City Police Department
- Tracy Zvenyach, Nurses Disrupted
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Region 5 roundtable on foster youth initiatives
- US Interagency Council on Homelessness peer-to-peer meeting
- Vicky Selkove, Office of Mayor Cory Mason, City of Racine
- West-Central Continuum of Care
- Wisconsin Apartment Association - I presented on renting to Section 8 and other rent-subsidized tenants as part of WAA's Autumn Conference.
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation Southeast Region
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation Southwest Region
- Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

In May and June, I assisted the Department of Public Instruction's Education for Homeless Children and Youth team with their evaluations of applications for the 2020-2023 EHCY grants.

I have been working and will continue to work with the State Medicaid Learning Collaborative to develop and expand innovative state strategies to provide housing-related supports and activities under Medicaid for individuals with substance use disorders. I look forward to these efforts providing resources to increase supportive services for the homeless and housing-insecure.

I have also been meeting with Governor's office and Budget office staff to develop and review ideas for the upcoming biennial budget. One thing we must not lose sight of as we move through our COVID-19 responses is that there are many unmet needs for programming and funding to fight homelessness - including case management, homelessness diversion, housing navigation, and support for landlords to bring more affordable units online.

In 2021, I plan to continue to work with national agencies like the National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Low-Income Housing Coalition, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Urban Institute and others to explore options to help facilitate development for low-income affordable housing – the availability of which is our largest challenge to our efforts to move people from homelessness into housing.”

### **Looking forward**

The Interagency Council on Homelessness looks forward to the following in 2021:

- 1) Completing the update for the “Hand and a Home” plan.
- 2) Continuing our COVID-19 responses to help our most vulnerable in Wisconsin – including supporting solutions for more sheltering and housing and advocating for distribution of vaccines for the homeless to protect them and agency workers to improve system capacity.
- 3) Providing resources through the upcoming biennial budget to assist the homeless.